

Otter, Salmon, and Eel in Traditional Gaelic Narrative

JOSEPH FALAKY NAGY

Department of English, University of California, Los Angeles

THERE is a saying preserved in early Irish literature, *in t-odur eter odraib* (Greene, line 579), 'the otter among otters'. This proverbial expression presumably refers to a unanimity and uniformity among otters. Michael O'Brien said of *odor*: 'This adjective, as has been pointed out by Thurneysen, comes from an Indogermanic *udros = "watery". The development of meaning is quite clear, watery > watery-animal = otter (it has this meaning in the Germanic languages) > otter-coloured. A further development in Irish but in the opposite direction is in its uses as = "dun coloured cow". There are, however, traces of the meaning "otter" in Irish *Odorchú* = "otter", and the tribe name *Odorraige*, *Odraige* as so many of the tribe names in *-raige* are from animal names, seems to mean "the otter folk"' (1923, 325).

This paper offers an inventory of the ways in which various Irish mythical images of otters and quasi-otters (including otters in name only) resemble and refer to one another on an ideological level. We will find that the traits of the otter of medieval Irish tradition and modern Gaelic folklore run parallel to those of two other aquatic creatures, the salmon and the eel. Furthermore, in the final part of the paper we shall see how this web of traditional Irish zoological connections sheds light on some Norse mythological animal figures and their own latent connections. Partially unveiled in the process of our investigation is a complex of story motifs and beliefs centred on watery beings that function as conduits of otherworldly power, wisdom, and even madness.

Odor, the archaic Irish word for 'otter' attested in the proverb quoted above, is cognate with English *otter* and Norse *otr*.¹ These words are all derived from an Indo-European root *udro- meaning 'water' or 'water creature'; English *water* is possibly from the same root (Pokorny 1959, 79). Eric Hamp relates Celtic *dubro-* (as in *doburchú*, 'dark, watery animal = otter') to IE *udro-:

We claim, then, that *dubro-* 'water' is not, in a strict sense, derived from *dhubh-(u-) 'dark' or from *dhub-(n-) 'deep' . . . Rather it is insisted that the same lexeme has persisted throughout; that the meaning has remained roughly (though surely not exactly) constant; that the phonological shape proceeded naturally by regular sound-change from *uódh/udh- to *udro-, then by sandhi to *dudro-; and that finally by phonological-semantic similarity to a form related derivationally both to 'black' and to 'deep' the hypothetical *dudro- (perhaps still alternating with the shape *udro-) was attracted to the shape *dubro-* (1972, 236-7).

Also from IE *udro- is *Hydra*, the name of a serpentine water-beast in Greek mythology. This polyccephalic monster is noted both for its ability to regenerate itself by growing new heads and for the venomousness of its blood.

Herakles, after he slew the Hydra, dipped his arrows into the beast's blood and later was accidentally poisoned by it (Roscher, s.v. Hydra).

Besides *odor/odrán* and *dobrán*²/*doburchú*, another Old/Middle Irish word for otter is *onchú* (Knott 1926, 214). According to Whitley Stokes, *onchú* means 'water-hound', consisting of *on/en* + *cú* (1909, 536, s.v. *onchú*). Pokorny claimed that the root of *on* is also evident in Irish *éicne*, one of the words for 'salmon' (1959, 807). Vendryes, on the other hand, contested the existence of an *on* meaning 'water' (1960, s.v. *on* and *onchú*). There is also, we should note, an *on* meaning 'blemish, fault'. *Onchú* appears occasionally as a personal name, and in some genealogies it is conjoined with other names that also have a canine element; for instance, *Doburchú mac Onchon* (O'Brien 1962, 47, 49), and *Onchú mac Fáelchon/Fáeláin* (ibid., 10, 348–9).

Onchú can refer more generally to hounds or ferocious animals as well as to otters. In an episode of the *Acallam na Senórach* (Stokes 1900a, lines 1896–922; cf. Ní Shéaghdha i. 224), Cailte confronts a trio of pirates in a boat: a man, his daughter, and their 'dog', *madra gairbhfhindach glasodhar* (Stokes 1900a, line 1900), 'a rough-haired, grey-brown (*odor*) hound'. In a different recension of the same work, the *madra* is a *cú*, and the latter term is glossed *onchú* (ibid., 289, note on lines 1899–900). The editor of the Glenmasan Manuscript, Donald Mackinnon, commenting on a passage where *cú*, *doburchú*, and *onchú* are used interchangeably (1907–8, 116), stated: '*Onchu* is frequently translated "leopard"; *dobur-chu*, "water-dog", is generally rendered "otter". The dim. of *dobur*, *dobhran* was the common name for the otter, to judge by the topography, in the West Highlands of the past. Nowadays the name is usually *beist-dubh* or *beist-donn*' (ibid., 114–15 n. 4).

The otter of Irish traditional narrative—the *odor*, *odrán*, *doburchú*, *dobrán*, or *onchú*—is, in most cases, nowhere near its Greek cousin the Hydra in ferocity or monstrosity. Monster otters do, however, exist in medieval literature. A ferocious *onchú* appears in the Early Modern Irish romance *Eachtra Cloinne Rígh na h-Ioruaidhe*. The heroes travelling across the sea in a boat pulled by a magical horse are attacked by a waterborne fiery *dobharchú nimhe* (or *cú nimhe*), 'poisonous/deadly otter'. They are spared when the otter goes in pursuit of the horse and the magical helper riding it (Hyde 1899, 58). In fact, the monstrous otter, the heroes learn, is an enchanted female, who spends alternate years as an otter, cat, or swan (ibid., 62).

In an episode of another Early Modern Irish romance, *Caithréim Cellaig* (Mulchrone, 15, 46–7; O'Grady 1892, i. 58), the Connaught prince Muiredach mac Eogain, travelling with his men past two lakes, encounters an *onchú nemi*. The creature is described as a *piast*, 'monster', which stands guard over a *co(i)ngelt*, 'pasture' (?). Muiredach, reproached by his fosterbrother for standing by while his men are being slaughtered by the *onchú*, pursues the monster in and out of the lake, and kills it. In honour of the occasion of his slaying the *cú na coingeilti*, 'guard dog of the *coingelt*', Muiredach, the text explains, is given a new name: a multiform of the epithet by which the monster itself was known, *Cú C(h)ointelt*.

The name *Cú Choingelt* is not unique to this heroic cycle of tales about Muiredach. It appears in historical records as well; there is, for example, the eighth-century Munster king *Cú Choingelt* (Byrne, 219–20). Also attested is the name *Congeltach*, analysed by O'Brien as an adjectival form from the verbal noun *congelt*, 'grazing' (1973, 223).

But, in the context of the *Caithréim* episode, it is tempting to see in this

particular *co(i)ngelt*, so closely associated with a frenzied 'dog' (the *onchú*), a compound of *cú/con-*, 'dog' and *geilt*, 'madman', instead of *congelt* meaning 'grazing, pasture'. Proinsias Mac Cana, in his examination of the parallels between the Muiredach saga and other narratives centred on similar heroic figures, has proposed a link between the *congelt* and the name of the monster Morholt (from the Tristan romance) by way of Irish *muirgeilt*, 'sea-geilt' (393–401, 408–9). The only so-called *muirgeilt* in extant Irish tradition is the half-salmon, half-human Líban (Best and Bergin, lines 3130–1), whose intimate relationship with an otter pet is discussed below.

The otter of the *Caithréim* story, a tough prey that brings death to those who encounter it, is reminiscent of the 'king of the otters' (*righ nan dòbhran* or *rí mhadra uisce*), a creature of Scottish and Irish folklore which, it is said, cannot be successfully hunted without the death of at least one man, woman, or dog. The otter king has one vulnerable spot only, under his arm or neck. He is a valuable catch because his skin confers invulnerability upon the person who wears it (Campbell, 216–17; Wood-Martin, ii. 121–2; Ó Súilleabháin 1942, 296). This instance of utilizing an otter for clothing is not unique. Otter skins are referred to elsewhere as coverings or bags. In the *Táin Bó Fraích*, reference is made to *crotbholg di chrocnib doborchón*, 'a lyre-bag [made] of the skins of otters' (Meid, line 76). Pokorny suggested that Latin *uter*, 'bag, uterus', is cognate with Irish *odor* and English *otter* (1959, 79).

Of course, the skin of the otter king not only serves the victorious hunter as garment but also protects him in a very special way. The virtual indestructibility of the *righ nan dòbhran*—his magical ability to survive—is actually transferred to the one who kills it and wears the pelt, a talisman which successfully contains and protects him. Similarly, Muiredach is metaphorically covered by the persona of the *onchú* and receives his lasting heroic fame through his otter enemy.

The account of how this Connaught hero acquired his nickname reminds us of a familiar 'boyhood deed' of Cú Chulainn, in which, after the young hero has slain the monstrous watchdog of the smith Culann, he receives the name as well as the function of that dog (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 675–704). The homology between monster otter and monster dog that I am suggesting in this comparison poses no problem in the context of Irish zoological classification, for the most commonly used words for otter in Old and Middle Irish, *doburchú* and *onchú*, are both compounds formed with the noun *cú*, 'dog'. Yet another Irish term for otter is *madra uisce*, 'water-hound' (Ó Súilleabháin 1942, 296). Cognate with *doburchú* is Welsh *dwrgi/dyfrgi*. In the languages and mythologies of the Celts, therefore, the otter is actually a water dog (see *Cormac's Glossary*, Meyer 1912, §§311, 424). According to the *Tromdámh Guaire*, there is even a longstanding enmity between cat and water dog. Hirusan, the ancestor of cats, was one day lying asleep beside a pond when an otter came out of the water and chewed the feline's ears; and so, since that time, cats have pointed ears (Joynt, lines 735, 740–4).³

The subsuming of otter under the category of dog is vividly demonstrated in another tale about Cú Chulainn, the account of his death (*aided*). When the badly wounded hero goes to the river for a final drink, a *doburchú* in the water laps up some of the hero's blood that has flowed into the river. Cú Chulainn kills the otter and then realizes that his death must now surely be near, for it had been prophesied to him that he would die as a result of his slaying a 'dog' (Van Hamel 1933, 111). The otter incident is still to be found

in recently collected Scottish oral variants of the story of Cú Chulainn's death (Maclean, 174–5, 180). Another illustration of the equation 'otter = dog' in contemporary Gaelic folklore is a motival substitution which we find in the myth of Cormac as it has evolved from medieval to modern times. In the Middle Irish *Cath Maige Mucraime* (O Daly), Cormac's predecessor in the kingship of Ireland is known as Mac Con, 'Son of Dog', and it is explained in the *Cóir Anmann* that he received the name because as a child he had been continually in the company of a certain canine (Stokes 1897, §71). In oral tellings of the story that were collected in the twentieth century (Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen, Tale Type 2412D, 'The Man Who Never Slept') Mac Con, a dog's best friend, is replaced by the nameless son of a human female and an otter (e.g., Ó Súilleabháin 1966, 21–37, collected from the Donegal storyteller Jimmy Cheallaigh in 1934).

The monstrous *onchú* slain by Muiredach and the nearly cannibalistic *doburchú* of the Cú Chulainn *aided* represent the darker side of otters in medieval Irish narrative. In medieval Irish saints' lives, many of which reflect an oral mythological tradition revamped to suit Christian purposes, the playful water dog occasionally functions as the saint's helper (Plummer 1910, i. cxliv n. 4; MacNickle, 155–7). The helpful water dog also appears in Bede's Life of Cuthbert, probably under Celtic influence (Webb, 85). In a story told in the *Buile Shuibhne* about Suibne and Saint Rónán (O'Keeffe, lines 38–57), as well as in an episode of the Life of Coemgen (Plummer 1922, i. 127, 136–7, 157), an otter rescues the saint's psalter after it has been thrown or dropped into the water. Coemgen's otter becomes a regular visitor at the saint's retreat, until one day a fellow saint visiting Coemgen entertains the idea of utilizing the otter's fine pelt as a bag or covering (*scing*). Evincing a remarkable telepathy, the otter leaves in fear and never returns (Plummer 1922, i. 129, 149–50, 162–3; ii. 343, note on §31).

Before he left the saint, Coemgen's otter, we are told in the Life, regularly supplied his patron with salmon (a similar relationship between holy man and otter is described in the *Vita* of Brendan—Plummer 1910, i. 132; ii. 289). The salmon-supplying otter is still to be found as a Märchen helper-figure in recent Gaelic folktale tradition (MacDougall, 119–20). But in an unusual medieval tale about Saint Brendan, the trout, a fish traditionally associated with the salmon (Mallory, 267, 272), is the instrument of the saint's revenge against an impious 'otter' (Plummer 1922, i. 81–3; O'Grady 1888–9, 298–9). The tale is centred on a man named Doburchú, the ancestor of the Uí Doburchon in Thomond and the father of Cú Chúa(i)n, who is probably the same as Cú Chúain, son of Onchú, described elsewhere as the ancestor of the Uí Onchon of Leinster (O'Brien 1962, 355, 430). Doburchú, who has incurred Brendan's ire and received his curse, soon afterward prepares a freshly caught trout in a foolish way: he cooks it over a fire of fern, which, we are told in an Old Irish Metrical Rule, does not make for a lasting fire (*Ní déne tenid retha, is and is gair a báduid*, 'make not a fire of fern; then its extinction is nigh', Strachan, 194). Furthermore, Doburchú proceeds to eat the fish in haste without waiting for it to cool. He goes to the river to slake his thirst, but he falls in, and the greedy consumer named Otter is turned into an otter.

Another otter by transformation in Irish tradition is the lapdog of the woman Líban, who escapes a cataclysmic flood by being turned into a salmon. This survivor, whose story is told in the LU text *Aided Eochaid meic Maireda*, lives mermaid-fashion in the ocean accompanied by her pet, who has become

a *dobrán*, 'otter'. The salmonid Líban is finally fished out of the waters by a saint, converts to Christianity, and lives out the rest of her life as a holy epiphany (Best and Bergin, lines 2958–3132). In her display of humble sanctity she is reminiscent of the obedient Mael Doburchon, 'Slave of the Otter', a figure in the Moling tradition who, at the behest of the saint, climbs to the top of a thorny tree in search of Moling's cowl. Mael Doburchon is thus flayed alive in an attempt to show his devotion to both Christ and Moling (Meyer 1893, 188–90; Stokes 1905, 152; Henry 1966, 201; Nagy 1982, 54–5). The story of Onchú mac Sáráin as told in the *Betha Colmáin maic Lúacháin* presents us with yet another devout 'otter', one who actually recrosses the threshold between life and death. The saint revives Onchú, a king of the Fir Tulach, in order to keep a promise, and the revenant obligingly tells Colmán in poetry of his adventures in the otherworld (Meyer 1911, 46–52). The stories of Onchú and Mael Doburchon, like most of the hagiographic stories told about genuine otters, serve as demonstrations of the recognition and respect due numinous men—particularly, Christian saints. The otter, in most cases, knows who is 'holy' and is himself a remarkable ally to such men of power. If the otter initially does not recognize sacred power, as in the case of Doburchú, he later becomes a witness to it.

The salmon, the fish with which the master fisherman the otter is particularly associated, is one of the most sacred animals in pagan Irish ideology. The mythical *eó* serves as the intermediary *par excellence* between this world and the otherworld for poets and other seekers of otherworldly knowledge. It is the salmon which, having eaten the nuts of bright wisdom that grow on the hazel trees in the otherworld, transport the radiant precious cargo up the rivers of Ireland to the poets who await the sacred fish on the banks (T. O'Rahilly 1946, 318–23). Salmon, while they are no longer portrayed as bringers of wisdom, are still objects of reverence in the folklore of contemporary Irish fisherman (Ó hEochaidh, 53–65).

In the light of the special function attributed to salmon in early Irish tradition, we can legitimately infer that the salmon with which the otter supplies both saint and folktale hero is a source of more than just bodily nourishment. Saint Coemgen's otter, who could read the mind of the cleric hankering for his skin, seems to have had remarkable mental capabilities, perhaps as a result of having ingested metaphysical 'brain food': salmon from the otherworld. Our admiration for the good sense of Coemgen's otter grows when we consider that, in addition to fetching wisdom-bearing salmon, he knows enough to fetch and preserve another, different kind of knowledge: the book-learning represented by the saint's psalter, which is accidentally dropped into the water and returned, miraculously intact, by the otter.⁴

As admirable as the saintly water dog's mental and physical agility is, it pales in comparison to the definitely unsaintly cunning of a legendary Leinster hero, the wily Maelodrán—'Bald Otter' or perhaps 'Slave of the Otter'. This personal name, which occurs quite frequently in medieval texts and is attached to various real and mythical figures (O'Brien 1962, Index, 692), may have originally designated some kind of otter or other aquatic animal; comparable is *rasmoel*, which also contains the element *mael* and means 'seal' (Wagner, 26). In the stories that have survived about this particular Maelodrán, we see him uncannily anticipating his enemies' moves, sneaking otter-like across the water, disguising himself as a woman in order to escape from his enemies, and finally even managing to return from the dead so as to avenge his murder

(Greene, lines 868–1034). The restless intelligence exemplified by this enemy-turned-ally of the king of Tara accords well with the energetic life-style of the otter.

In the *Buile Shuibhne*, the devout otter which rescues Saint Rónán's psalter from a watery fate functions as a complement to yet another restless figure, the *geilt* Suibne, who threw the precious psalter into the water in the first place. After various adventures, the blasphemous *geilt* finally mends somewhat his anti-social ways and becomes an odd friend of the saint Moling, to whom the *geilt* dictates his poems. Thus Suibne comes to resemble the otter, another 'beast' who comes out of the wilderness to become companion and supplier to a saint (Chadwick, 124). The *geilt*, as exemplified by Suibne in particular, is a divided personality, gifted with poetic inspiration yet also driven mad by it. Condemned to lead the life of an animal, he is *gan chéill* (O'Keeffe, line 387), 'without sense'. Indeed, this is the way that the trout-eating Doburchú, a man turned into an otter, describes himself in a poem he addresses to his son Cúchúan when the latter is about to eat a trout himself (Plummer 1922, i. 82). In fact, Doburchú states that he came to be *gan chéill* as a result of having been burnt by the still hot fish. This motif is reminiscent of what happens to the young Finn in Irish tradition, as well as of what happens to the young Sigurd in Norse tradition. Both of these heroes acquire special knowledge after coming in physical contact with cooked otherworldly food. In the case of Finn, he cooks a salmon of knowledge, burns his thumb with hot juice when he tries to push down a blister on the fish, puts his thumb in his mouth, and thus acquires poetic inspiration. In the case of Sigurd, he cooks the heart of an *orm*, 'serpent', burns his finger on the liquid coming out of it, places the burnt appendage in his mouth, and acquires the ability to understand the language of birds (Nagy 1980).

Irish salmon—and perhaps otters as well—are not only emblematic of knowledge, raging from the expert knowledge of professional poets to the warped knowledge of madmen; they are also emblematic of martial valour and strength. *Onchú* and *eó* are used in the bardic idiom to designate warriors and patrons in their martial capacity (*RIA Dict.*, s.v. *onchú* and *eó*). In a praise poem by the thirteenth-century Tyrone poet Giolla Brighde mac Con Midhe, otter and salmon are brought together in a pair of analogies:

Snámh in aghaidh Easa Ruaidh tachar / Sí Chonuill chrannruaidh; / is dul in eas ar onchoin / treas do chur ar Chonollchoibh.

To fight with the offspring of red-speared Conall is like swimming against Eas Ruaidh; to join battle with the men of Tír Chonaill is like diving into a cataract after a water-hound (Williams, 32 §12; trans., 33).

To engage in warfare is thus like hunting an *onchú*, or swimming like a salmon. Eas Ruaidh, in the poetry of Giolla Bhrighde (*ibid.*, 54 §7, 56 §14) and elsewhere, is regularly associated with salmon, particularly the salmon of wisdom (T. O'Rahilly 1946, 319–20, 330).

In the death-tale of Cú Chulainn, we have seen that the great warrior hero identifies himself with the otter when he realizes that his own death is foreshadowed in the death of the water dog. Cú Chulainn also has an intimate connection with salmon. He is known for his 'hero's salmon leap' (Sayers 1983, 53–4), one of his many acrobatic specialities, and he appears in some tales as a fisher of salmon of the Boyne (e.g., Hull 1962–4, 310). The hero's relationship with salmon is ambivalent: he both is like a salmon and kills

salmon. This paradox is comparable to that of Cú Chulainn's slaying the blood-drinking otter and subsequently identifying with it, and the paradox of the hero Muiredach's slaying the *cú na coingeilti* and subsequently becoming the Cú Choingelt himself. One of the few stories from the Ulster cycle in which we see Cú Chulainn bested (Meyer 1883–5, 182–3), begins with a scene of the hero's spearing the salmon of Linn Feicc in the Boyne River. (Significantly, in the *Macgnimartha Finn* text, the salmon of wisdom from which Finn gains wisdom is said to come from Linn Feicc [Meyer 1882, 201].) While Cú Chulainn is fishing, he encounters a musician named Senbecc úa Ébriú: Little Old One, descendant of Speckled Salmon (on *é* 'salmon', see Pokorny 1914–15, 201–2). Senbecc approaches in a boat from the otherworldly source of the hazel nuts and salmon of wisdom, the well of Segais. The warrior catches the diminutive visitor in his hand, as easily as he caught the fish with his spear, but Senbecc, after an unsuccessful attempt to bargain with Cú Chulainn for his release, escapes from the hero's grasp by playing a *timpán* (lyre) and putting him to sleep. This waterborne, aged, yet hardy survivor who outwits the mighty fisherman Cú Chulainn is reminiscent of Fintan mac Bóichra, an ageless mythological sage, who is known for his durability and shapeshifting. After he finally and irrevocably takes on the form of a salmon, Fintan even survives a nearly deadly encounter with a bird of prey, although the salmon loses an eye in the struggle (Meyer 1907a, 24–39; Hyde 1914–16, 138–43). It is as if Senbecc were the instrument of the wisdom-bearing salmon's revenge on the fisherman hero: the text tells us that after he escaped from his captor's grasp, the descendant of Speckled Salmon took away the catch of fish that Cú Chulainn was holding in his other hand. According to another extant version, the visitor from Segais is in search of the hazelnuts of wisdom that have floated down the river (are they contained in the salmon caught by Cú Chulainn?). It is, however, not specified at the conclusion of this variant text of the tale whether the musician succeeded in retrieving the nuts (Gwynn 1942, 26–7).

There is a third supernaturally empowered aquatic animal that appears in the Cú Chulainn cycle and enters into a similarly ambivalent relationship of identification and antagonism with the hero. This is the eel, a creature which, like the salmon, is associated with sacred springs (Logan, 121–6), and, like the otter, with madness. In some parts of the Highlands, eating the head of an eel is thought to drive the consumer insane.⁵ Stories are told about hapless eaters of eel who are found the day after their repast raging madly against horses in the belief that eels come from horse hairs (Campbell, 221–2; Goodrich Freer, 192–3). In earlier Irish narrative, the eel is one of the manifestations of the war-goddess Morrígan, who in a variety of incarnations both befriends and persecutes the warrior Cú Chulainn throughout his career, but particularly in the course of the cattle raid of Cúailnge. While engaged in one of his most desperate combats during the cattle raid, Cú Chulainn, fighting in a ford, is attacked by the Morrígan three times, and for each occasion she assumes a different form (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 1846–71, 1969–2030; 1967, lines 1962–2011). Once she attacks in the shape of an eel (*escong*), which coils itself around Cú Chulainn's legs and incapacitates him, thus leaving Cú Chulainn open to the attack of his opponent, the horn-skinned Lóch. But the Ulster hero manages to wound the eel and forces it to flee. The Morrígan later recovers thanks to the good wishes of Cú Chulainn, the only one who can heal the wounds he himself has inflicted (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 2039–55;

1967, lines 2103–13). The recovery of the war-goddess who had assumed an eel's shape takes on added significance in light of the eel's traditional reputation for 'tenacity of life' (Ó Súilleabháin 1942, 298; Ó hEochaidh, 66–7; Fitzgerald, 172–3, 186—also mentioned in this last source is a Munster legend according to which the poet Gearóid Iarla, born of an aquatic female, was transformed into a huge eel that lived in Loch Guirr [197]).

The otter too, as we have noted, is known for its magical invulnerability (which gives it a longevity comparable to that of the eel), and so is the salmon/trout on occasion. In a story told about the child Colum Cille, he brings a dead *brecc* back to life and puts it in a well, where it will live forever; any pot in which the trout is put to be cooked refuses to grow hot (O'Donnell, 44; Henebry, 562). Similar traditions have been recorded concerning other 'uncookable' trout, salmon, and eels living in other holy wells (Logan, *passim*). In one Kerry legend, the punishment of madness is meted out to the violator of a well containing sacred trout: 'An enemy (Crosby his name) set his two dogs to go into the well and attack the trout. When the dogs came out of the well, they attacked and savaged the enemy, and as a consequence he went mad and stank until the day he died' (ibid., 123). These bloodthirsty canines rendered rabid in the well suggest the venomous lakeside *onchú* encountered by Muiredach and his men; the dogs' victim, driven insane and befouled, corresponds, on the other hand, to the man who goes mad from eating eel, considered in recent Gaelic tradition to be an impure food (Campbell, 221).

In the *Táin* episode of the war-goddess' attack in the ford, Cú Chulainn, after he has got rid of the Morrigan, is still faced with his deadly human enemy Lóch. To overcome this horn-skinned opponent, the hero resorts cunningly to his secret weapon, one that is uniquely Cú Chulainn's: the Gae Bolga, which was given to Cú Chulainn by his fostermother Scáthach, a multiform of the Morrigan (Van Hamel 1933, 15). At a desperate moment in his fight with Lóch, the hero's charioteer Láeg sends Cú Chulainn this weapon through the water (C. O'Rahilly 1967, lines 2068–9). In the Stowe version of the *Táin*, we are told that whenever Láeg would send the Gae Bolga to his master in the water, he would utter a poem warning Cú Chulainn of its coming (C. O'Rahilly 1961, lines 3251–4)—as if the virulent floating weapon had a mind of its own and could turn just as easily against its owner as against an enemy. At the climax of his duel with Lóch, Cú Chulainn, having caught the Gae Bolga, casts it at his opponent, and it enters the hapless warrior through his anus and/or pierces his heart (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 2024–5; 1967, lines 2003–4), destroying him from within as thoroughly as the eel threatened to destroy Cú Chulainn from without. Functional only in the water, the Gae Bolga makes an appearance in the fight with Lóch almost as a variation on the mysterious underwater threat encountered by the hero immediately before he throws his special weapon: the threat posed by the goddess Morrigan in the shape of a twisting, enveloping eel.

Elsewhere in the *Táin* Cú Chulainn uses the Gae Bolga against Fer Diad, another horn-skinned opponent (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 2575–6; 1967, lines 2614–15). As in the encounter with Lóch, so here too the weapon is sent through the water to Cú Chulainn by his charioteer, who lets it flow downstream. The hero catches it with his toes and throws it through his opponent's anus (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 3095–100; 1967, lines 3344–61). The results are disastrous for Fer Diad: . . . *gorbo lán cach n-alt 7 cach n-áge de dá fhorrindib*

(C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 3358–9), 'and [the Gae Bolga] filled every joint and limb of him with its barbs' (trans., *ibid.*, 229); and *Álad óengae leis ac techt i nduni 7 trichu farrindi ri taithmech, 7 ní gatta a curp duni go coscáirthea immi* (C. O'Rahilly 1967, lines 3345–7), 'It made one wound as it entered a man's body but it had thirty barbs when one tried to remove it and it was not taken from a man's body until the flesh was cut away about it' (trans., *ibid.*, 228–9). It is reasonable to infer, as did T. F. O'Rahilly (1946, 62, 476), that Fer Diad and Lóch, both horn-skinned victims of Cú Chulainn's unique weapon, are multiforms of one another.

To my knowledge, the only extant analogue to Cú Chulainn's feat of catching the Gae Bolga with his toes is the curious case, mentioned in a medieval list of Irish wonders, of the blind man who fished for eels in the Shannon by catching them between his fingers and toes (*in dall no ted fon Sinaid co tabrad les escung gach ladra lam 7 cos do*, Todd 1848, 206). While Cú Chulainn is not really blind like the eel fisher, he is noted for the squint that appears on his face when he is in his battle-fury (Le Roux, 331–3). The eel that attacks Cú Chulainn in the ford is itself one-eyed or about to be deprived of an eye. When the hero fights back against the Morrígan in her heifer shape (immediately before Cú Chulainn's encounter with the Morrígan eel—C. O'Rahilly 1967, lines 1995–6), or in her wolf-shape (immediately after the encounter with her in the shape of an eel—C. O'Rahilly 1976, line 2000), he puts out one of her eyes. Cú Chulainn crushes the eel's ribs between his toes (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 1859–60).

Outside of the *Táin*, the major instance of Cú Chulainn's using the Gae Bolga is in the story of his tragic encounter with his only son Conla. Hard-pressed in his fight with the offspring he does not recognize (or whom he chooses not to recognize), the hero resorts to his secret weapon. It is thrown to him in the water by his charioteer, and Cú Chulainn catches it with his toes. He casts the weapon through the water and disembowels Conla with it (Thurneysen 1921a, 410; cf. Van Hamel 1933, 15). Cú Chulainn's tragic fight with his son is analogous to his fight with Fer Diad. In each case Cú Chulainn finally resorts to the Gae Bolga against a nearly victorious opponent who is closely related to him—who is, in fact, a reflection of Cú Chulainn himself. For Conla is like his father in every respect, except that Conla does not know how to use the Gae Bolga, while Fer Diad, similarly Cú Chulainn's equal in all respects but one, is his beloved fosterbrother, whose name, according to Hamp, means '[a] man of the pair' (1982).

Of the two elements in *Gae Bolga* the first would appear to be the word *gae*, 'spear', though this reading was challenged by Eoin MacNeill, who analysed *Gae Bolga* as *gabul ga*, 'fork-spear' (1932, 121). It is about the meaning of the second element, *bolga*, that most of the controversy has swirled. T. O'Rahilly argued for a *bolg* in *Gae Bolga* other than *bolg*, 'bag, bubble' (cognate with Welsh *bol[y]*), or *bolc/bolg* meaning 'gap, notch' (cognate with Welsh *bwlch*). It is certainly difficult to derive what appears to be a genitive form *bolga* in *Gae Bolga* from either *bolg*, 'bag', or *bolc*, 'gap', of which *boilg* or *boilge* would be expected in the genitive singular (T. O'Rahilly 1942, 163–6). O'Rahilly proposed instead a *bolg/Bolg*, genitive *bolga*, meaning 'lightning/ (God of) Lightning' (*ibid.*, 54). Alternatively according to Hamp, *bolga* was originally **balu-gaisos*, 'death spear' (1973, 180–2). Whatever the true etymology of (*Gae*) *Bolga*, there is undoubtedly a paradoxical and usually deadly suppleness—a 'baglike' quality coupled with rigidity—that is associated with

the Gae Bolga and other precious objects designated as or associated with the word *bolg* in medieval Irish tradition.

Among these *bolg* objects is the spear of a figure known as Gai Bolce or Oengus Gai Buaibthech, 'Oengus of the poisonous spear'. The adjective *buaibthech* perhaps derives from the noun *bodb*, 'scald-crow' (this is, like Morrigan, a name of the goddess of war), and is to be translated 'deadly, warlike'. T. O'Rahilly, however, suggested the meaning 'venomous' (1946, 64). The *RIA Dictionary* proposes 'boastful, arrogant', and connects *buaibthech* to *búafad* 'act of boasting', following O'Davoren's Glossary (*buaibtech* i. *uallach*, Stokes 1904, 236).

Gai Bolce/Oengus's weapon, which appears in the story of the Expulsion of the Déisi, is said to be decorated with three chains, each of which requires three men to hold it (*Gai nemnech co slabradaib. Teora slabrada esti triar for cech slabraid*, Best and Bergin, lines 4339–40). These chains prove to be deadly: Oengus spears the high-king Cormac's son in front of the boy's father, and, as Oengus is removing the weapon from the body, one of the suspended rings strikes Cormac's eye and destroys it (*ibid.*, 4369–71; cf. Meyer 1901, 104–6; 1907b, 15–16; Binchy 1978, iii. 925). The putting-out of Cormac's eye proves to be the beginning of the end of his reign. He retires from the Tara kingship and moves to Clettech, where he dies a year after the accident (Best and Bergin, lines 4378–9). According to another text, Cormac is finally undone by a fish: he chokes to death on a bone from a salmon fished out of the Boyne (Power, 43; Ó Cathasaigh, 68–70).

The Gae Buaibthech is also known in medieval tradition as the Crimall Birn Buadaig, which in turn is equated with the Lúin Celtchair (T. O'Rahilly 1946, 65). This super-weapon, in order to be activated, must be dipped continually in poison (Knott 1936, 1230–55). The Lúin is wielded by a multiform of the Ulster trickster figure Bricriu Poison-Tongue (Nemthenga): namely, the ill-tempered Ulster warrior Dubthach Black-Tongue (Daelthenga), who in the *Mesca Ulad* appears with an *onchú* on each shoulder (Watson, lines 724–5; 737, note to line 828). Analogous to Dubthach's pets are the *togán/togmall*, 'pine-marten', and bird that perch atop Medb's shoulders in the *Táin* (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 920–7; 1967, lines 1273–9; Murphy, 1953, 332–3, s.v. *toghán*). The pine-marten belongs, like the otter, to the Mustelidae family (Larousse, 559).

We should keep in mind during this discussion of poisonous weapons and beings, that the otter (*onchú*) killed by the hero Muiredach is characterized as poisonous, as is the *dobhurchú nimhe* of *Eachtra Cloinne Rígh na h-Ioruaidhe*. According to the *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, the blood of otters is poisonous (Todd 1867, 159)—like Dubthach's spear and the Hydra's blood.

Other wondrous objects named *bolg* in medieval literature besides the Gae Bolga, are the sword Caladbolg, 'hard *bolg*', and the Corrbolg, 'pointed, swelling [?] *bolg*'. Caladbolg is the name of the sword of the great Ulster hero Fergus mac Roig. It is said to be from the otherworld (*a sídib*, C. O'Rahilly 1967, line 4775), and it glows like a blazing candle (*ibid.*, line 4718). The Caladbolg functions as a rather explicit penis symbol in an episode of the story of the cattle-raid of Cúailnge. It is stolen from Fergus by Ailill's charioteer while Fergus is fornicating with Medb, Ailill's wife. The cuckolded king subsequently taunts his sexual rival Fergus for the loss of his 'sword' (C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 1031–122). The weapon is also known as the Caladcholg (Mackinnon 1905–6, 312). The Welsh cognate of *colg* 'sword' is *cal(y)* or *cala*,

'penis' (Lewis and Pedersen, 33). Corresponding to *Caladbolg* in Welsh is the name of Arthur's sword, *Caledfwlch* (*caled* 'hard' + *bwllch* 'gap'), which is the source of *Caliburnus/Excalibur*. According to T. O'Rahilly, 'it is quite possible that [Celtic] **kaletō-bolgos* developed in Welsh to **caledvwlw*, and that the no longer intelligible second element of the compound was assimilated to the word *bwllch*, "gap, notch" (resulting in *caledfwlch*), in an attempt to give a semblance of meaning to the name' (1946, 70). Thurneysen, however, held that *Caledfwlch* was borrowed from Irish (1921a, 115). In the *Breudwyt Ronabwy* Arthur's sword (unnamed) is described as having two serpents engraved on it which, when the sword is drawn, appear to spew forth fire from their mouths (Richards, 10–11). We are reminded of the deadly chains attached to Oengus's weapon, the Gae Buaibthech.

The Corrbolg belongs to the Fenian realm of narrative. The first element of this compound name is probably the adjective *corr* as in *corrguinech/corrguinecht*, 'magician/magic'. *Corr*, 'pointed, swollen, strange', also appears in various modern Irish names for sand-eel: *corr*, *corr gainimh*, *corr séanta* (Ó Súilleabháin 1942, 299). The Corrbolg was owned by the Tara *ríghénnid* Cumall, the father of Finn. But, like Fergus' Caladbolg, the Corrbolg becomes the object of contention and is stolen: it is taken from Cumall in the Battle of Cnucha, when he is slain by his enemies. His son Finn wins the Corrbolg back from the warrior who slew Cumall, and the young hero presents it to the remnants of his father's *fían* as a demonstration of his prowess (Meyer 1882, 197, 201). Too hastily discounted by T. O'Rahilly is the medieval tradition that the Corrbolg was a bag containing Cumall's treasures, and that it had been made out of the skin of a crane (*corr*), who was actually a metamorphosed woman of the otherworld (MacNeill 1908, 21–2).

The baglike features of *bolg* objects at least provide a background to the tendency of some scribes to associate the *bolg* of *Gae Bolga*, *Caladbolg*, and *Corrbolg* with the word for 'bag' (T. O'Rahilly 1946, 62), even if these features do not provide us with solid etymological evidence. Still, our analysis of the use and effects of the Gae Bolga and kindred artefacts does appear to support the controversial reconstructed form *bolggae* (**bolgo-gaisos*), 'bag-spear', which, according to Pokorny, was originally a noun, and then later was treated as an adjective—hence the redundant *Gae Bolg[g]a* (1918, 195–200). Of course, to accept Pokorny's reconstruction is not to embrace his far-fetched theory that the 'bag-spear' attests to an Arctic element in Irish culture (*ibid.*, 200 ff.).

Also noted by Pokorny (1917, 192–5) is a passage of verse from the *Fled Bricrenn* in which a *bolg* adjective is applied to Cú Chulainn, who is, as Pokorny pointed out, known not only as the user of a weapon called the Gae Bolga but also the performer of a feat called the *léim dar boilg*, 'leap over the bubble [or gap]', which is also attributed to his charioteer Láeg (Sayers 1981, 163, 166). The triumphant Cú Chulainn returning from combat is described in the *Fled Bricrenn* poem as a *culmaire bolgada[n]* (Best and Bergin, line 8903), 'swollen [?] chariot-rider' (we should note, however, that *bolgada[n]* is glossed *dar berna*, 'over the gap[s]' in the text). Pokorny suggests for MS. *bolgadā* the reading *bolgadach*, a rare noun or adjective meaning 'swelling' or 'swollen'. The editors of LU, on the other hand, insist that straight or horizontal strokes over vowels consistently indicate the omission of -n (Best and Bergin, xxiv). But perhaps the equally rare word *bolgada[n]* also should be connected to *bolg*, 'bag', for it would seem that the image being evoked in this

description is that of a chariot-borne Cú Chulainn distorted and distended in his martial fury—as he is, for example, in a climactic scene of the *Táin*, when he furiously attacks the men of Ireland (C. O’Rahilly 1976, lines 2245–317; 1967, lines 2263–323). The baglike quality of the enraged Cú Chulainn emerges most clearly in the description of the *ríastrad* he experiences immediately before he uses the Gae Bolga against Fer Diad: *Ra lín at 7 infisi amail anáil i lles* (C. O’Rahilly 1976, line 3093), ‘He swelled and grew big as a bladder does when inflated’ (trans., *ibid.*, 207); or, *goros lín att 7 infithsi mar anáil i llés co nderna thúais n-úathma[i]r n-acbéil n-ildathaig n-ingantaig de* (C. O’Rahilly 1967, lines 3317–19), ‘He swelled and grew big as a bladder does when inflated and became a fearsome, terrible, many-coloured, strange arch’ (trans., *ibid.*, 228). *Lés* ‘bladder’ is glossed *bolg* in both Cormac’s Glossary (Meyer 1912 §833) and O’Davoren’s (Stokes 1904, 400). Interestingly, Fergus’s sword Caladbolg, can, like Cú Chulainn, grow to rainbow proportions, as an extension of its wielder’s fury: *Inn uair ba háill búalad de ‘no, ba méitithir ra stúaisg nímí i n-aeór é* (C. O’Rahilly 1967, lines 4775–9), ‘When one wished to strike with it, it was as big as a rainbow in the air’ (trans., *ibid.*, 268; cf. line 4784, where, in a *roscad*, Láeg describes the Caladbolg as *telggai boga fuile*, ‘the (rain?)bow [that] sheds blood’). Cú Chulainn’s expanding condition during his *ríastrad* is consistent with the Indo-European mythological image of the hero in his battle-frenzy experiencing a kind of ‘inflation’ as he becomes a receptacle for martial inspiration (Henry 1982, 235–242).⁶

In general, then, these *bolg* objects (including the Gae Bolga and Cú Chulainn himself) expand and contract, growing alternately flexible and rigid, similar to the Morrígan eel. Furthermore, some of these objects have aquatic connections or origins. The treasures contained in the Corrbolg appear and disappear, depending on the tide (MacNeill 1908, 43). Excalibur comes out of the water and returns to its native element at the end of Arthur’s life (Ford 1983, 271). According to a late poetic text, the Gae Bolga, used only in the water, was made out of the bones of a sea monster (O’Curry ii. 311; Thurneysen 1921a, 412). This weapon, given to Cú Chulainn by Scáthach/Morrígan/Bodb, and the Morrígan eel both resemble the *buarach an Bhaoi(bh)*, ‘spancel of the Bodb’, a many-eyed, poisonous creature of Highland folklore that attacks in dark water and fords, twisting itself around its victims’ feet and draining them of their blood (Plummer 1910, i. clxxxvii n. 10; Campbell, 219). This beast has nine squinty eyes—it is also known as the *buarach bhaoi nan súilean claon* (compare the one-eyed or squinty eel of the *Táin*, and the squinty wielder of the Gae Bolga). Ó Súilleabháin in his *Handbook* gives *buarach na baoite* as an Irish name for the lamprey (1942, 299).

Yet another eel-weapon is to be found in the story of how the Munstermen repelled the invasion of Cormac mac Airt (*Forbuis Droma Damhghaire*). Summoned by the Munstermen to counter the magic of the druids in the Tara king’s hire, the archdruid Mug Ruith utilizes among other tricks his *cloch nime*, ‘poisonous stone’, which, when thrown into the water, becomes a long, thick eel (*murescang sithremair*) that coils around the druid’s enemy, readying him for the kill (Sjoestedt-Jonval, 84–6, 92). A comparable, albeit Christian demonstration of sacerdotal power occurs in a story told in the Latin Life of St Samthanna, where a corrupt cleric fleeing from the saintly prioress is prevented from crossing a river by rising waters and an eel (*anguilla*) that wraps itself around him (Plummer 1910, ii. 256). Plummer compared the cleric’s plight—brought about by the will of a insulted female with

supernatural powers—to Cú Chulainn's plight in the grips of the spurned war-goddess in the ford (1910, i. clxxxvii n. 10). But the Ulster hero, unlike Samthann's victim, manages to master the supernatural force represented by the constricting eel, and he turns that force against and even inside his opponent Lóch via the penetrating, as opposed to enveloping, Gae Bolga.

Reminding us of the watery company the eel keeps, as well as of Cú Chulainn's own ambivalent relationship with salmon, Bricriu, witnessing the hero's struggle in the ford, mockingly characterizes Cú Chulainn in the coils of the Morrígan as overwhelmed by a *bratán bec*, 'diminutive salmon' (C. O'Rahilly 1976, line 1992). This analogy gives meaning to a detail supplied by the LL text, that the Morrígan eel (like the salmon containing wisdom and the Gae Bolga) travelled downstream (*lasan sru[th]*, C. O'Rahilly 1967, line 1998), Bricriu's comment serves as an oblique reference to the image of Cú Chulainn as a fisher of salmon—including the salmon of wisdom, which, like the eel thwarting Cú Chulainn, is said to be one-eyed (T. O'Rahilly 1946, 319).

We see salmon and eel brought together elsewhere as well. As noted above, salmon and eel are said to cohabit in some sacred wells (Logan, 122–6). And in oral versions of the story of Finn mac Cumhaill's infancy, the abandoned hero, who later in his youth slays a *togán* (MacNeill 1908, 33) and receives wisdom from a salmon, is rescued from the water holding a salmon, an eel, or both in his hands (Nagy 1985, 111). In the medieval *dindshenchas* of Crotta Cliach, reference is made to a salmon's (*bratán*) turning into a dragon (*drac*), another kind of aquatic 'snake'. The monster is finally driven by St Fursa back into Loch Bél Dracon (Stokes 1894, 440–1; Gwynn 1913, 224).

Salmon and eel are grouped together, along with the ubiquitous otter, in the following quatrain from a metrical catalogue of sylvan gustatory delights that is included in the text of the *Acallam*:

Bratáin luatha Lindmuine escanna Sinna sóiri,
cailigh fhedha Fhidrindi dobráin a diamhraib Daile
(Stokes 1900a, lines 734–5; cf. Ní Shéaghda 1942, 60)

Swift salmon of Lindmuine, eels from the noble Shannon, woodcocks of
Fidrenn, otters from the secret places of the Deel. . . .

It is perhaps not coincidental that Lindmuine, here associated with salmon, is the name of the spring, the source of Lough Neagh in Antrim, that overwhelmed Liban's father and transformed her into the *muirgeilt*, a half-salmon, half-human being (Best and Bergin, lines 2957–63; Gwynn 1913, 450; 1924, 68). Also notable, and somewhat out of place in this passage, is the woodcock (*cailech fedha*). Arguably, it functions in the aesthetics of the quatrain as a single terrestrial/celestial counterweight to the three aquatic creatures enumerated. The *cailech fed(h)a* does in fact appear in other poetic catalogues of Fenian food and game. Finn offers woodcock along with sloes and acorns to his intended bride in the *Tochmarc Ailbe* (Thurneysen 1921b, 276). Diarmaid offers Gráinne woodcock and mead in a quatrain preserved in a gloss on the *Amra Choluim Chille* (Stokes 1899, 264). And in a Fenian *laoi*, Cailte is ordered by Cormac to bring two *coilech fedha* to Tara. Mentioned in the same quatrain are a fox, two wolves, and two swans (MacNeill 1908, 20).

There are, of course, empirical grounds for the complex connections evident in myth and literature among otter, salmon, and eel. Crayfish and eel constitute the bulk of the diet of the Old World otter, which, as the stories

themselves attest, also catches and eats salmon (Larousse, 563). The mastery of the otter over not only salmon but fish in general is aptly expressed in a medieval Irish quatrain:

Is dobran re miniascach seobacc re hénaihb sléibhe,
catt re lochaid, cú re muic ben mic is mathair chéile.
(Meyer 1908, 268)

As otter is to small fish, as hawk is to mountain birds, as cat is to mice, as dog is to pig—[so are] daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

The traditional image of the otter as paradigmatic aquatic hunter is also reflected in Welsh tradition. According to the *Hanes Taliesin*, the witch Ceridwen's metamorphic pursuit of Gwion Bach, who has stolen the poetic essence, takes place on land, in the water, and in the air. Prey and predator take on shapes appropriate to each zone: hare and greyhound, fish and otter, bird and hawk (Ford 1979, 34). Presumably, it is to his brief piscine existence that the omniscient poet Taliesin (the final incarnation of Gwion Bach) refers in one of the poems attributed to him when he says that he was once a salmon (*bum glas gleissat*, Evans, 22, line 19).

The otter in its search for food moves from one body of water to another by night. Similarly, the eel becomes a nocturnal traveller, even on dry land if need be, when it is migrating toward the ocean to spawn (Larousse, 227, 563). Stories are told in Gaelic tradition featuring the eel's remarkable locomotion on dry land (Wood-Martin i. 379). In the water as well, the otter resembles the snake-like eel: 'The otter's movements on land are clumsy, but it makes up for this in the water, where it swims with a serpentine movement of the body and tail, the limbs being pressed to its sides' (Larousse, 562).⁷ Otter and eel are grouped together along with the swan as infernal swimmers in an otherworldly tableau witnessed by the travellers in the *Immram Ua Corra*: three gigantic rivers filled with devils, which appear in the shape of otters in the first river, eels in the second, and black swans in the third (*trí srotha ingantacha . . . sruth doborchon 7 sruth di escangaib 7 sruth di eladaib dubaib*, Van Hamel 1941, 105).

The eel forms a natural pair with the salmon as well. The migratory habits of the European freshwater eel and the Atlantic salmon present a striking contrast: salmon return from the ocean to rivers and lakes to spawn, while eels leave their freshwater homes to spawn in the ocean.

Two migrations merit fuller description. . . . The Atlantic salmon [*Salmo salar*] spawns in freshwater where the young feed for periods ranging from just over a year to seven or eight years. . . . Once in the sea little is known of their habits; none returns in less than a year, and some may spend four or more years in the sea before returning. After spawning most males die, but about five per cent of the females return to spawn again, and a very few for a third spawning. . . . [The migration of the freshwater eels (genus *Anguilla*)] is equally spectacular, and both they and the salmon show unique powers of navigation. The European and eastern North American eels spawn in a region of the Atlantic near the Sargasso Sea. The young drift back to their respective coasts. . . . Their migration may extend into late spring, and in any one river the migration time and migration path are very similar year after year. Countless millions reach the rivers, where they will stay for five to twelve years if they are males, and from ten to twenty-four years if they are females. Before leaving the adults stop feeding, become silvery, and their eyes get bigger. The fishes are in excellent condition, with large food reserves in the flesh and are thus fitted for their long fast as they migrate to spawn in the deep

warm waters of the western Atlantic. . . . It is of interest to note that the spawning journey of the salmon is also a fasting one. . . . Salmon have a homing instinct probably guided by smell and oceanic currents, the drive being provided by the spawning urge. Similarly the spawning urge sends the eel off on its long journey, which often starts on dark windy moonless nights (Larousse, 227).

That there was lore among the Irish concerning the reproduction of eels is indicated by the bizarre and obscure entry on *fet* in O'Mulconry's Glossary. In this gloss we find a description of a trick used by serpents (*nathraig*) to lure eels, presumably for the purpose of intercourse. Also mentioned here is the belief that all eels are female (Stokes 1900b, 255; cf. Hoffmann-Krayer and Bächtold-Stäubli, s.v. Aal, section 1).

Otter, salmon, eel—each creature functions in the traditions we have examined as a wondrously mobile waterborne 'container'. The otter catches, preserves, and fetches not only salmon but also books, which are kept dry in the water by the water dog. The *onchú* contains in a broader sense as well, in its capacity as a *cú* guarding territory and people. We have seen that the viciously protective *onchú nemi* and the heroic *Cú Choingeilt*, who guards his people, are both comparable to that honorary otter *Cú Chulainn*, the Hound-Guardian of Ulster.

The salmon, meanwhile, contains and transports *imbas* from the other-world. And the eel, in contrast to the beneficent salmon, contains and constricts human victims in the water. Each creature, therefore, holds or preserves in different ways, and each is distinguished by what it contains: the otter is a container of salmon (and sometimes of poison), the salmon of *imbas*, and the eel of hapless victims, poison, and madness. These contents are usually released and utilized—that is, the animal container is penetrated, opened, even turned inside out, and/or transformed. The saintly otter surrenders the salmon and book, and is tamed. Magical otters are skinned, and their skin and blood are utilized. The *cú na coingeilti* is slain and its identity is transferred to Muiredach. The devotee Mael Doburchon is flayed alive, to the greater glory of Moling and Christ. The foolish trout-eater Doburchú is exposed as a beast that does not know how to eat in a civilized manner. The salmon of wisdom is caught and consumed, and the *imbas* is transferred from fish to poet. In the story of Finn, in fact, a bubble on the salmon 'bursts' while it is being cooked, and the hero acquires wisdom through this minor explosion of the salmonid container. The strangling eel releases its victim or is wounded in the struggle. It too is occasionally cooked and consumed, but the consequences are dire. For the eel, like the otter and salmon, can be opened and turned into a commodity or content, but, in that case, it opens up and turns inside out the body or system it enters: what was contained is released, what was implicit becomes explicit, what was ordered is reordered or deprived of order. A dish of eel, like a too-hot trout, renders the consumer insane—that is, he is deprived of sense and rendered 'beside himself'. The Gae Bolga penetrates the victim and then disembowels him. A salmon of wisdom, when eaten, enables the poet to release the 'contents' of his poetic knowledge, a process that, at least in the story of the young Finn, entails considerable disruption: he usurps the talent and even the name of his mentor (Meyer 1882, 201). The otter as an infiltrating content does not always wreak such conspicuous havoc, but in the cases of Muiredach and the dying *Cú Chulainn*, the about-to-be-slain otter 'brings out' the heroic destiny of the hero (particularly the blood-drinking otter of the *Cú Chulainn aided*, who fulfils the prophecy about *Cú Chulainn's*

death). And certainly the adventures of Maelodrán—who in a remarkable scatological episode identifies himself to the defecating king of Tara by giving him whips that sting and penetrate the royal behind (Greene, lines 904–17), and in another episode escapes almost effortlessly from a house that has been surrounded by his enemies (*ibid.*, lines 965–85)—are characterized by a dynamism reminiscent of the sudden progressions and regressions brought about by the insinuating salmon and eel. In sum, these mediating creatures and the figures associated with them, who can travel over both land and water and cross between this world and the otherworld, tend to contain and connote various kinds of power and intelligence, ranging from the druidic to the martial, from the creative to the destructive, from the revelatory to the deceptive, from wisdom to cunning and madness. It is not surprising then to find otter, salmon, and eel each playing a role in the cycle of tales centred on Cú Chulainn, a figure who synthesizes these various forces, and who is himself simultaneously a container that frequently inflates and bursts with dramatic consequences, as well as a passive content gripped in a state of martial possession. We see him literally turning himself (or being turned) inside out in the various descriptions of his *ríastrad*. For example:

Srengais in n-ól don fhidba chnána comtar écnaig a ginchróes. Tánatár a scoim 7 a t[h]romma co mbátar ar etelaig ina bél 7 ina brágit. . . . Atchessa na coinnli bodba 7 na cithnélla neme 7 na haible tened trichemrúaid i nnéllaib 7 i n-áraib úasa chind re fiuchud na ferge fírgarge hitrácht úaso. . . . Ardithir immorro remithir talcithir tresithir sithidir seólc(h)rand prímlui[n]gi móri in buinne díriuch dondfhala atracht a fírchléthe a chendmullaig hi certairdi, co nderna dubcháich ndruidechta de amal cháig do rígbudín in tan tic rí díá tincur hi fescur lathe gemreta.

(C. O'Rahilly 1976, lines 2259–61, 2265–8, 2274–8)

He drew back his cheek from his jawbone until his inward parts were visible. His lungs and his liver fluttered in his mouth and his throat. . . . The torches of the war-goddess, virulent rain-clouds and sparks of blazing fire, were seen in the air over his head with the seething of fierce rage that rose in him. . . . As high, as thick, as strong, as powerful and as long as the mast of a great ship was the straight stream of dark blood which rose up from the very top of his head and dissolved into a dark magical mist like the smoke of a palace when a king comes to be waited on in the evening of a winter's day.

(trans., *ibid.*, 187)

This explosive guardian of Ulster, who fights to keep the borders of the province intact, is, complementarily, a master of travelling and penetrating other boundaries (Watson, lines 320–2, 346–7). His characteristic weapon is the Gae Bolga, which makes its victims come apart from inside, and the use of which signals Cú Chulainn's own frenzied eruption, paradoxically framed within an almost shamanic containment that is engineered by the inspiring Morrígan/Bodhb.

Many of these same connections and parallels among otter, salmon, and eel can be found in Norse mythology as well, particularly in the Loki cycle and the closely related myth of the origins of the Niflung hoard. The trickster god Loki, aptly described by Dumézil as emblematic of 'impulsive intelligence' (1959, 218–24), has been compared to the catty Ulsterman Bricriu,⁸ and to Bricriu's double, the black-tongued Dubthach, who, as the reader will recall, carries otters on his shoulders. Furthermore, Loki appears in Norse myth as the prototypical salmon. According to Snorri's *Edda*, it is because the warrior

god Thor captured and squeezed Loki while the miscreant god was attempting to flee in the shape of a salmon that all salmon have tapering bodies. Ironically, not only is Loki the father of salmon but, we learn in the same text, he is also the inventor of the net with which salmon are caught (Holtsmark and Helgason, 67–8; Rooth, 156–60)—a paradox comparable to that of Cú Chulainn's jumping like a salmon and fishing for them as well. Loki is the father of the Midgard Serpent (*orm*), which girds or contains the earth and lives in the ocean (Holtsmark and Helgason, 32, 59, 69–70). It is a conger-like creature that could truly be described as a 'water snake'—which, in fact, is what the word for eel in Irish, *escong*, probably means.⁹ Thor, in the Eddic *Hymisqviða*, fishes for the poison-spewing Midgard *orm* in the ocean (Holtsmark and Helgason, 60–2; Kuhn and Neckel i. 88–95), just as he fished for its salmon father Loki in the story mentioned above. Of the few details available to us about Loki's slithery offspring, perhaps the most suggestive is its name, Jormungand, which means 'gigantic magical wand' (de Vries, s.v. *gandr*). Is this venom-spewing *orm*—a fabulous wand which threatens to 'strangle' the world—comparable to the 'poisonous stone' of the druid Mug Ruith, which turns into a supple constricting eel in the water? Just as Cú Chulainn, the possessor of the Gae Bolga, is entwined in the coils of the war-goddess, analogously the serpentine power of Loki's *orm*, perhaps Loki's own magic wand, ultimately turns against him. After the gods capture Loki in the form of a salmon, they punish him for his crimes by tying him to a rock with the guts of one of his sons, and suspending a dribbling poisonous snake above him. Whenever Loki, bound with the contents of his son and tortured with venom, writhes in pain, the earth shudders—as it does when the fisherman Thor strikes the world-binding Midgard serpent (Holtsmark and Helgason, 68; Kuhn and Neckel i. 92).

In the story of the origins of the Niflung hoard, Loki, prototypical salmon, ambushes and slays a character that characteristically preys on salmon—the shapeshifting Otr (Otter). Indeed, Loki wins a freshly caught salmon as well as Otter's skin when he kills him in his sleep (Holtsmark and Helgason, 92–4; Kuhn and Neckel i. 173). As restitution to be paid to the slain fisher's kinsmen, Loki must procure treasure, enough to fill Otter's skin with treasure. The precise correlation between otter (skin) and treasure insisted upon in this myth is curiously echoed in the Scottish lore concerning the *rioh nan dòbhran*, whose skin is 'worth as many guineas as are required to cover it' (Campbell, 216–17).

To fill the otter, Loki obtains the hoard of the pike Andvari, from whom the divine trickster, according to the *Reginsmál*, demands *lindar logi* (Kuhn and Neckel i. 173), 'the fire in water'. The wealthy victim of Loki's extortion describes himself as ancient, having lived at least one other life before his life as a fish (Kuhn and Neckel i. 174). Similarly, the one-eyed salmon of wisdom which the antediluvian Irish sage Fintan mac Bóchra finally becomes, is characterized as old and protean (Meyer 1907a; Hyde 1914–16, 138–43). The Niflung hoard, the brilliant treasure from the water with which Loki fills the deceased Otr, no doubt represents more than just material wealth. It is yet another manifestation of 'la gloire lumineuse', the bright supernatural content sent through water which Dumézil has shown to be a central image in Indo-European conceptualizations of power and wisdom (Dumézil 1973, 21–38). An example of this motif in early Irish lore is the aforementioned tradition

about poetic knowledge, the *imbas* from Segais that 'illumines' or 'enlightens', *imbas forasna*[i] (Ford 1974).

In our Norse myth, the salmonid Loki acquires, and the otter becomes the container of, this watery and dazzling otherworldly import. The hoard in the otterskin is in turn taken and guarded by a not-so-distant cousin of the watersnake son of Loki: another venom-spewing *orm*, Otter's brother Fáfnir.¹⁰ This serpentine hoarder is then slain by the hero Sigurd as it approaches the water. By killing the monster and releasing its contents (Sigurd bathes in Fáfnir's blood), Sigurd wins both the Niflung hoard and also the special knowledge contained in the heart of the guardian *orm*.¹¹ This knowledge (more specifically, the ability to understand the language of birds¹²) is serendipitously conferred upon Sigurd when he burns his finger upon the juice erupting from the roasted heart—a fortuitous circumstance that, as we have already noted, resembles the plight of the Irish Doburchú, who burns himself with the hot trout and becomes an otter that composes poetry. But Sigurd's 'happy fault' is reminiscent most of all of the situation of the poet Finn, who burns his finger on the salmon of knowledge and thus acquires otherworldly inspiration and wisdom.

There is indeed sufficient evidence to suggest that salmon, otter, and eel are intimately related to one another in Gaelic tradition, and that, as we shift our attention to ancient Scandinavia, these relations and the animals' connotations as containers/contents spill over into the world of Norse mythology. Darting beneath these Irish and Norse tales is a multivalent metaphor of containment, the study of which could doubtless be extended beyond the two traditions we have considered.

1. German *Otter*, 'snake', a homonym of *Otter* meaning 'otter', is a form of *Natter*—cf. English *nadder* from *nadder* (Kluge, s.v. *Otter*).

2. In a set of late medieval Irish notes on a Latin text, *fiber*, 'beaver', is glossed *dobhran* (Stokes 1860, line 375; see *ibid.*, 70–1, note). There is, however, no native Irish word for beaver, and in fact there is no evidence for beavers ever having inhabited Ireland (Grzimek ii. 281). *Dobhrán* in all other extant contexts means 'otter' (cf. Zimmer, 163–5).

3. There is the suggestion of a hereditary feud between otter and badger in the medieval story of how the Munster prince Cormac mac Taidg trapped badgers (*broic*) at the advice of the druid Odrán (Otter[?]), in order to serve them to Taidg, his father—whose name (Taidg) probably means 'Badger' (Stokes 1862, xlii–xliv; Mac an Bhaird).

Another, more famous Cormac—the son of Art and a king of Tara—strikes a wily bargain with yet another Odrán, this one a *bachlach*, 'churl', of the Déisi (Greene, lines 555–80; on Cormac's relationship with the Déisi, see below).

4. Professor Brendan O Hehir of the University of California, Berkeley, has pointed out to me that Rónán refers to his psalter, which is dropped in the water and recovered by the otter, as *breac* (O'Keefe, line 98), 'speckled'—an adjective used frequently in medieval Irish literature to designate the trout.

5. A dish of cooked eel, served by his lady, is the undoing of the hero of the traditional English ballad 'Lord Randal' (Child 12): Child i. 158, 160, 161, 163. The motif of eels as poisonous food also appears in Italian and Swedish analogues (*ibid.*, 155). In one Scottish variant of 'Lord Randal' the fatal meal consists of speckled trout (*ibid.*, 164).

6. In the story of the death of Fergus mac Léti (arguably a 'double' of Fergus mac Roig—see Binchy 1952, 34), the warrior-king goes on a fateful swim and encounters an aquatic beast (*muirdris*, *ibid.*, 38) that expands and contracts like a smith's bellows (*bolg gobenn*, *ibid.*)—an image that connotes the 'dark' side of the martial function turning against the hero. As a result of this encounter, Fergus's mouth is hideously distended, in a way reminiscent of Cú Chulainn's *riastrad* (the evidence for this connection is presented in Nagy 1983).

7. In collected texts of the traditional English ballad 'The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter' (Child 110), the heroine presents her swimming credentials to her skeptical lover by stating that in deep water she swims as well as an otter or an eel (Child ii. 461, 464, 466, 468).

8. Most recently, Edgar M. Slotkin has been working on the parallels between these two mythological figures. I am referring here in particular to his paper, 'Loki and Bricriu', which was delivered in the session on Irish and Scandinavian Folklore at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society, held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in October of 1983. The present paper was delivered in an earlier form at the same session.

9. Stokes 1893, 66, s.v. *escong*, = *esc* 'water' + **ong*, which, according to Stokes, is cognate with Latin *anguis*; see also Pokorny 1959, 43. Alternatively, the second element of *escong* is *ong*, 'groan, lament, tribulation'; the same root, according to Pokorny (ibid., 322), is apparent in *ennach*, 'scald-crow' (specifically in reference to Badb/Morrigan; see Gwynn 1926), and *enchache*, which appears in the Würzburg commentary as a gloss on *scurrilitas* (Stokes and Strachan ii. 639). Whatever the etymology of *escong*, there is certainly a traditional connection between eels and snakes: according to a legend told by Tory Islanders and recorded by Seán Ó hEochaidh, the poisonous snakes expelled by St Patrick from Ireland turned into eels (33, 66).

Comparable to the eel is the creature known in medieval Irish tradition as the *doburnathair*, 'watersnake' (note that the first element of the compound is the same word as in *doburchú*). In the *Cogadh* the Vikings are said to have dipped their arrows in the venomous blood of dragons, *dobornathraig*, and *onchon* (Todd, 1867, 159). We are reminded of Herakles and the use he made of the Hydra's blood. In the Irish version of the Alexander romance, the Greek hero and his men encounter monster crabs with the skins of *dobarnathraig*, hides that are tougher than breastplates (Meyer 1887, lines 731–2: *partlaig mora co croicnib dobornathrach impu cruadi oldait luirecha*). Eel-skin, like the skins of the *doburnathair* and the otter, serves as an especially durable covering or container; it was used for the making of purses even in recent times (Ó Súilleabháin 1942, 298). A much more ethereal substance is salmon-skin: see the story of Eogan Taidlech's shiny coat (Stokes 1897 §38).

Escmug is a medieval Irish word glossed as *escong* and analysed by the glossators O'Davoren and O'Mulconry as *esc* 'water' + *mucc* 'pig' (Stokes 1904, 322; 1900b, 255). According to our sources, the *escmug* is so called because it roots like a pig (ibid.). The observation brings to mind the characterization of the *torc allaid* in a Milan gloss (*itius anuas dusclaid anís*, 'they [the passers-by] eat it [the fruit of the vine] from above, he [the wild boar] roots it up from below', Stokes and Strachan i. 345). In the glossators' interpretation of *escmug* we have further evidence for a homology between salmon and eel in Irish zoological classification, for the *bratán* too, as the name indicates, is a 'stabber/digger' during spawning (see T. O'Rahilly 1942, 170, versus Gray, 344). The salmon is similarly known as a 'pig' (*orc*—see *Cormac's Glossary*, Meyer 1912 §1018, and *RIA Dict.*, s.v. 1 and 2 *orc*; cf. Pokorny 1959, 821, 1031).

10. In Irish folklore the eel sometimes serves as a jealous guardian of treasure: see Wood-Martin i. 378–9; Ó Súilleabháin 1942, 504. In Germanic traditions the guardian and possessor of treasures *par excellence* is the dragon—see, for example, the *wyrm* in the second part of the Old English poem *Beowulf*. Dragon-skin, like eelskin, has its uses. In the first part of the poem, the non-serpentine but certainly rapacious Grendel is said to be the owner of a *glōf* (glove, bag) made of dragon-skins (*sīo wæs orðoncum eall gegyrwed / dēofles cræftum ond dracon fellum*, Klaeber, lines 2087–8; on the meaning of *glōf*, see ibid., glossary and note on line 2085).

11. In addition to this knowledge, Sigurd acquires from the *orm* horny skin which makes him nearly invulnerable: in this respect, both the Norse hero and his opponent (which he must pierce from below with a special sword, presumably because the monster too is horn-skinned), bring us back to the Irish *doburnathair* with its impenetrable hide, as well as to the horn-skinned Lóch and Fer Diad, each of whom is undone by Cú Chulainn's Gae Bolga.

12. Similarly, eating a white eel or an eel's heart confers wisdom or the ability to understand birds, according to traditional European beliefs recorded in Hoffmann-Krayer and Bächtold-Stäubli, s.v. Aal, section 3. Mentioned in Ó Súilleabháin's *Handbook of Irish Folklore* (1942) is a traditional story about a man who 'sees [the] hidden wealth of Ireland as the result of eating the flesh of an otter' (505).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BEST, R. I. and OSBORN, BERGIN (edd.). *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin, 1929).
 BINCHY, DANIEL, A. 'The Saga of Fergus mac Léti', *Ériu* 16 (1952), 33–48.
 BINCHY, DANIEL, A. (ed.). *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols. (Dublin, 1978).
 BYRNE, FRANCIS J. *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (London, 1973).
 CAMPBELL, JOHN GREGORSON. *Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1900).
 CHADWICK, NORA K. 'Geilt', *SGS* 5 (1942), 106–53.

- CHILD, FRANCIS J. (ed.). *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (New York, 1882-98, reprinted 1965).
- DUMÉZIL, GEORGES. *Loki* (Darmstadt, 1959).
- DUMÉZIL, GEORGES. *Mythe et épopée 3. Histoires romaines* (Paris, 1973).
- EVANS, J. GWENOGVRYN (ed.). *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin* (Llanbedrog, 1910).
- FITZGERALD, DAVID. 'Popular Tales of Ireland, RC 4 (1879-80), 171-200.
- FORD, PATRICK K. 'The Well of Nechtan and "La Gloire Lumineuse"', *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity*, ed. Gerald James Larson, C. Scott Littleton, and Jaan Puhvel (Berkeley, 1974), 67-74.
- FORD, PATRICK K. 'Meredith Lloyd, Dr. Davies, and the *Hanes Taliesin*', *National Library of Wales Journal* 21 (1979), 27-39.
- FORD, PATRICK K. 'On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh', *BBCS* 30 (1983), 268-73.
- GOODRICH-FREER, A. *Outer Isles* (New York, 1902).
- GRAY, LOUIS H. 'On the Etymology of Certain Celtic Words for *Salmon*', *American Journal of Philology* 49 (1928), 343-7.
- GREENE, DAVID (ed.). *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories*, MMIS 16 (Dublin, 1955).
- GRZIMEK, BERNHARD (gen. ed.). *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia*, 13 vols. (New York, 1972-5).
- GWYNN, EDWARD J. (ed. and trans.). *The Metrical Dindshenchas* 3, 4, RIA Todd Lecture Series 10, 11 (Dublin, 1913, 1924).
- GWYNN, EDWARD J. '*ennach* = *badb*', *Hermathena* 44 (1926), 71-2.
- GWYNN, EDWARD J. (ed.). 'An Old-Irish Tract on the Privileges and Responsibilities of Poets', *Ériu* 13 (1942), 1-60, 220-36.
- HAMP, ERIC P. 'Keltic *dubro*- "Water": The Story of a Lexeme', *Studies in Linguistics in Honor of George L. Trager*, ed. M. Estellie Smith (The Hague, 1972), pp. 233-7.
- HAMP, ERIC P. 'Varia I. 10. *At-bail(l)*, (*gaé*) *bulga*', *Ériu* 24 (1973), 179-82.
- HAMP, ERIC P. 'Varia VII. 7. *Fer Diad*', *Ériu* 33 (1982), 178.
- HENEGBRY, R. (ed. and trans.). 'The Life of Columb Cille', *ZcP* 3 (1901), 516-71.
- HENRY, P. L. *The Early English and Celtic Lyric* (London, 1966).
- HENRY, P. L. '*Furor Heroicus*', *ZcP* 39 (1982), 235-42.
- HOFFMANN-KRAYER, E., and HANNS BÄCHTOLD-STÄUBLI (edd.). *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, 10 vols. (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927-42).
- HOLTSMARK, ANNE and JÓN HELGASON (edd.). *Snorri Sturluson Edda: Gylfaginning og Prosafortellingene av Skáldskaparmál*, 2nd edn. (Copenhagen, 1950).
- HULL, VERNAM (ed. and trans.). 'Ces Ulad: The Affliction of the Ulstermen', *ZcP* 29 (1962-4), 305-14.
- HYDE, DOUGLAS (ed. and trans.). *Eachtra Cloinne Rígh na h-Ioruaidhe and Giolla an Fhiughá*, ITS 1 (London, 1899).
- HYDE, DOUGLAS (ed. and trans.). 'The Adventures of Léithin', *Celt. Rev.* 10 (1914-16), 116-43.
- JOYNT, MAUD (ed.). *Tromdámh Guaire*, MMIS 2 (Dublin, 1931).
- KLAEBER, FREDERICK (ed.). *Beowulf*, 3rd edn. (Lexington, 1950).
- KLUGE, FRIEDRICH. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 20th edn., ed. Walther Mitzka (Berlin, 1967).
- KNOTT, ELEANOR (ed.). *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn*, 2 vols., ITS 22, 23 (London, 1922, 1926).
- KNOTT, ELEANOR (ed.). *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, MMIS 8 (Dublin, 1936).
- KUHN, HANS, and GUSTAV NECKEL (edd.). *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, I. Text; II. Kurzes Wörterbuch, 4th edn. (Heidelberg, 1962, 1968).
- LAROUSSE. *Larousse Dictionary of Animal Life* (London, 1967).
- LE ROUX, FRANÇOISE. 'Le guerrier borgne et le druide aveugle. La cécité et la voyance', *Ogam* 13 (1961), 331-42.
- LEWIS, HENRY and HOLGER PEDERSEN. *A Concise Comparative Celtic Grammar*, rev. edn. (Göttingen, 1961).
- LOGAN, PATRICK. *The Holy Wells of Ireland* (Gerrards Cross, 1980).
- MAC AN BHAIRD, ALAN. 'Tadg mac Céin and the Badgers', *Ériu* 31 (1980), 150-5.
- MAC CANA, PROINSIAS. 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature', *ÉC* 7 (1956), 76-114, 356-413; 8 (1958), 59-65.
- MACDOUGALL, JAMES (ed. and trans.). *Folk and Hero Tales*, Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition, Argyllshire Series 3 (London, 1891).
- MACKINNON, DONALD (ed. and trans.). 'The Glenmasan Manuscript', *Celt. Rev.* 2 (1905-6), 20-33, 100-21, 202-23, 300-13; 4 (1907-8), 10-27, 104-21, 202-19.
- MACLEAN, CALUM I. (ed. and trans.). 'A Folk-variant of the Táin Bó Cúailnge from Uist', *Arv* 15 (1959), 160-81.

- MACNEILL, EGIN. (ed. and trans.). *Duanaire Finn* 1, ITS 7 (London, 1908).
- MACNEILL, EGIN. "'De Origine Scoticae Linguae"', *Ériu* 11 (1932), 112-29.
- MACNICKLE, SISTER MARY DONATUS. *Beasts and Birds in the Lives of the Early Irish Saints*, Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1934).
- MALLORY, JAMES P. 'Proto-Indo-European and Kurgan Fauna II: Fish', *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 11 (1983), 263-79.
- MEID, WOLFGANG (ed. and trans.). *Die Romanze von Froech und Findabair: Táin Bó Froích*, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft 30 (Innsbruck, 1970).
- MEYER, KUNO (ed.). 'Macgnimmartha Find', *RC* 5 (1882), 195-204.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed. and trans.). 'Irish Miscellanies', *RC* 6 (1883-5), 162-92.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed. and trans.). 'Die Geschichte von Philipp und Alexander von Macedonien', *IT* 2, pt. 2 (Leipzig, 1887), 1-108.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed. and trans.). 'Anecdotes of Saint Moling', *RC* 14 (1893), 188-94.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed. and trans.). 'The Expulsion of the Dessi', *Y Cymmrodor* 14 (1901), 101-35.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed.). 'The Colloquy between Fintan and the Hawk of Achill', *Anecd.* 1 (Halle, 1907a), 24-39.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed.). 'Tucait indarba na nDéssi', *Anecd.* 1 (Halle, 1907b), 15-24.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed.). 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *ZcP* 6 (1908), 257-72.
- MEYER, KUNO (ed. and trans.). *Betha Colmáin maic Lúacháin*, RIA Todd Lecture Series 17 (Dublin, 1911).
- MEYER, KUNO (ed.). *Sanas Cormaic*, *Anecd.* 4 (Halle, 1912).
- MULCHRONE, KATHLEEN (ed.). *Caithréim Cellaig*, MMIS 24 (Dublin, 1971).
- MURPHY, GERARD *Duanaire Finn* 3 (Introduction and notes), ITS 43 (Dublin, 1953).
- NAGY, JOSEPH F. 'Intervention and Disruption in the Myths of Finn and Sigurd', *Ériu* 31 (1980), 123-31.
- NAGY, JOSEPH F. 'The Wisdom of the Geilt', *Éigse* 19 (1982), 44-60.
- NAGY, JOSEPH F. 'Beowulf and Fergus: Heroes of Their Tribes?', *Berkeley Old English Colloquium Series* 2 (1983), 31-44.
- NAGY, JOSEPH F. *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985).
- NÍ SHÉAGHDHA, NESSA (ed.). *Agallamh na Seanórach*, 3 vols. (Dublin, 1942, 1945).
- O'BRIEN, MICHAEL. 'Hibernica', *ZcP* 14 (1923), 309-34.
- O'BRIEN, MICHAEL (ed.). *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1962).
- O'BRIEN, MICHAEL. 'Old Irish Personal Names: M. A. O'Brien's "Rhys Lecture"-Notes, 1957', ed. Rolf Baumgarten, *Celtica* 10 (1973), 211-36.
- Ó CATHASAIGH, TOMÁS. *The Heroic Biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin, 1977).
- O'CURRY, EUGENE. *On the Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, 3 vols. (London, 1873).
- O DALY, MÁIRÍN (ed. and trans.). *Cath Maige Mucraime*, ITS 50 (Dublin, 1975).
- O'DONNELL, MANUS. *Betha Colaim Chille*, ed. and trans. A. G. Kelleher and G. Schoepperle (Urbana, Illinois, 1918).
- Ó HÉOCHADH, SEÁN. 'Seanchas Iascaireachta agus Farraige', *Béaloideas* 33 (1965), 1-96.
- O'GRADY, STANDISH H. (ed. and trans.). 'Les O'Dobarchon', *Mélusine* 4 (1888-9), 298-9.
- O'GRADY, STANDISH H. (ed. and trans.). *Silva Gadelica*, 2 vols. (London, 1892).
- O'KEEFE, J. G. (ed.). *Buile Shuibhne* (Dublin, 1931).
- O'RAHILLY, CECILE (ed.). *The Stowe Version of Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Dublin, 1961).
- O'RAHILLY, CECILE (ed. and trans.). *The Táin Bó Cuailnge from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1967).
- O'RAHILLY, CECILE (ed. and trans.). *Táin Bó Cuailnge: Recension I* (Dublin, 1976).
- O'RAHILLY, THOMAS F. 'Notes, Mainly Etymological', *Ériu* 13 (1942), 144-219.
- O'RAHILLY, THOMAS F. *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946).
- Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN, SEÁN. *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (Dublin, 1942).
- Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN, SEÁN (ed. and trans.). *Folktales of Ireland* (Chicago, 1966).
- Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN, SEÁN, and REIDAR CHRISTIANSEN. *The Types of the Irish Folktale*, FFC 188 (Helsinki, 1963).
- PLUMMER, CHARLES (ed.). *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1910).
- PLUMMER, CHARLES (ed. and trans.). *Bethada Náem nÉirenn*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1922).
- POKORNY, JULIUS. 'Zur irischen Wortkunde', *ZcP* 10 (1915), 198-204.
- POKORNY, JULIUS. 'Beiträge zur ältesten Geschichte Irlands. 1. Die Fir Bolg, die Urbevölkerung Irlands', *ZcP* 11 (1917), 189-204.
- POKORNY, JULIUS. 'Beiträge zur ältesten Geschichte Irlands. 3. Érainn, Dárin(n)e und die Iverni und Darini des Ptolomäus', *ZcP* 12 (1918), 323-57.
- POKORNY, JULIUS. *Indogermanisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols. (Bern, 1959, 1969).

- POWER, MAURA (ed. and trans.). 'Cnucha cnoc os cionn Life', *ZcP* 11 (1917), 39-55.
- RICHARDS, MELVILLE (ed.). *Breudwyd Ronabwy* (Cardiff, 1948).
- ROOTH, ANNA BIRGITTA. *Loki in Scandinavian Mythology* (Lund, 1961).
- ROSCHER, W. H. (ed.). *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1884-1937).
- SAYERS, WILLIAM. 'Varia IV. Three charioteering gifts in Táin Bó Cúailnge and Mesca Ulad: immorchor ndelend, foscul ndiriuch, léim dar boilg', *Ériu* 32 (1981), 163-7.
- SAYERS, WILLIAM. 'Martial Feats in the Old Irish Ulster Cycle', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 9 (1983), 45-80.
- SJOESTEDT-JONVAL, MARIE (ed. and trans.). 'Forbuis Droma Damhghaire', *RC* 43 (1926), 1-123; 44 (1927), 157-86.
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed.). *Irish Glosses: A Medieval Tract on Latin Declension* (Dublin, 1860).
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed.). *Three Irish Glosses* (London, 1862).
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed. and trans.). 'The Voyage of the Húi Corra', *RC* 14 (1893), 22-69.
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed. and trans.). 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindshenchas', *RC* 15 (1894), 272-484; 16 (1895), 31-83, 135-67, 269-312.
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed. and trans.). *Cóir Anmann*, *IT* 3, pt. 2 (Leipzig, 1897).
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed. and trans.). 'The Bodleian Amra Choluimb Chille', *RC* 20 (1899), 30-55, 132-83, 248-87, 400-37.
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed.). *Acallamh na Senórach*, *IT* 4, pt. 1 (Leipzig, 1900a).
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed.). 'O'Mulconry's Glossary', *Arch.* 1 (1900b), 232-324, 473-87.
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed.). 'O'Davoren's Glossary', *Arch.* 2 (1904), 197-504.
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed. and trans.). *Felire Oengusso Céili Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (London, 1905).
- STOKES, WHITLEY (ed. and trans.). *In Cath Catharda*, *IT* 4, pt. 2 (Leipzig, 1909).
- STOKES, WHITLEY and JOHN STRACHAN (edd. and trans.). *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1901, 1903).
- STRACHAN, JOHN (ed. and trans.). 'An Old-Irish Metrical Rule', *Ériu* 1 (1904), 191-208.
- THURNEISEN, RUDOLF. *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (Halle, 1921a).
- THURNEISEN, RUDOLF (ed. and trans.). 'Tochmarc Ailbe', *ZcP* 13 (1921b), 251-82, 297-9.
- TODD, JAMES H. (ed. and trans.). *The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius* (Dublin, 1848).
- TODD, JAMES H. (ed. and trans.). *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (London, 1867).
- VAN HAMEL, A. G. (ed.). *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories*, MMIS 3 (Dublin, 1933).
- VAN HAMEL, A. G. (ed.). *Immrama*, MMIS 10 (Dublin, 1941).
- VENDRYES, JOSEPH. *Dictionnaire étymologique de l'irlandais ancien. Lettres MNOP* (Paris, 1960).
- VRIES, JAN DE. *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden, 1962).
- WAGNER, HEINRICH. 'Origins of Pagan Irish Religion', *ZcP* 38 (1981), 3-28.
- WATSON, J. CARMICHAEL (ed.). *Mesca Ulad*, MMIS 13 (Dublin, 1941).
- WEBB, J. F. (trans.). *Lives of the Saints* (London, 1965).
- WILLIAMS, N. J. A. (ed. and trans.). *The Poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe*, ITS 51 (Dublin, 1980).
- WOOD-MARTIN, W. G. *Traces of the Elder Faiths*, 2 vols. (1902, reissued Port Washington, New York, 1970).
- ZIMMER, HEINRICH. 'Keltische Studien', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 32 (1893), 153-229.